

SADDAM HUSSEIN

The Fighter, the Thinker and the Man

By Amir Eskander

Translated by Hassan Selim

Part II Chapter 6

The basic factors in economic growth

We must first point out that the population of Iraq is only slightly over 12,000,000. In traditional calculations, this number appears small in comparison to other societies such as Iran on Iraq's eastern border, and Turkey on its northwestern border. The annual rate of population growth is only 3.2%.

But Saddam Hussein considers the question from a different perspective, having regard to the possibilities of developing the "quality" of men, for a small number of men in a developed society can withstand and overcome a large number of men from an undeveloped society who only have numbers on their side. He views this from two perspectives: the first is economic, the second military.

He says: "Some say that the 3.2% rate of population growth should not rise; it might be necessary for it to fall. But we consider that this rate should be maintained. If there is a possibility of increasing it, then it should be increased.

The Iraqi area has large economic resources; it also lies on the eastern tip of the Arab homeland, and meets two states that are more populous than itself, so the size of its population must be sufficient to defend both itself and Arab interests in this area. A country carrying such national and popular responsibilities should develop its human resources so that the weight of its population outstrips that of the peoples that face it (1)."

Of course, mere numbers are not the decisive factor-perhaps not even the basic factor-as regards economic growth within a given society. Let us give an example. In most Arab lands, particularly Egypt, approximately one-third of the work force is engaged in agriculture, whereas the proportion in Holland varies between 9% and 10%, and in Sweden it does not exceed 6%. In the U.S.A. only 3%-4% of the total population (namely some 7,000,000 souls) suffice to provide the food for some 200,000,000 people. There is also left over the American agricultural surplus which is generally used as a tool in political negotiations with large countries and as an instrument of political and economic pressure against newly-independent countries in the backward or the sleeping world.

If this is the case with agriculture, how much truer it is of industry--especially in the light of new developments in technology! Indeed, one of the problems occurring with the use of highly developed forms of technology is not the lack or scarcity of workers able to operate them but the unemployment-whether hidden or manifest-that is consequential upon them. This has occurred in some parts of the Arab homeland such as Algeria, where the population only exceeds that of Iraq by 6,000,000, and fundamental problems connected with the course of industrial development have arisen. The extent to which they suit the size and type of the work-force in any society depends not only on the economic and human circumstances and resources of that society, but also on its political and social philosophy which define the nature of economic growth within it, the targets for which it will strive during the period of growth, and the type of classes and social groupings that will profit from it.

The nationalization of oil wealth in Iraq has provided large financial resources that increase every year. To these must be added the traditional resources of agriculture, trade, and national exploitation of some other mineral resources.

So the Revolution that found the treasury empty when it took power, and had national revenue not exceeding Iraqi people, and that there were two consequences to this: freedom from foreign imperialist influence and the achievement of an independent national will. The dependence of the Iraqi economy on the structure of world imperialism was broken.

An aspect of the above was that Iraq was spared entry onto the treadmill of foreign loans that were tied-or were at the very least oppressive--upon the national will in development activities. It is difficult-if not impossible--for the vast majority of backward or sleeping states to avoid them. In the long run they come to form, politically and economically, a wall that blocks their growth and shuts out the horizons of their development and progress. How many attempts at growth have failed in the Third World as a result of seduction by what were originally loans on easy terms but then became debts that smothered all growth. This policy is one of the many ways in which imperialism stops the development of the sleeping lands and keeps them in a state of backwardness, tied by chains that cannot be unlocked to the structure of world imperialism.

Naturally, the accumulation of capital through oil revenues does not provide a way in itself out of the hellish cycle of imperialist loans and multi-national companies.

It is a fact that many of the oil-exporting countries, notably Iran in the Middle East, suffer a crisis of debts accumulating to bodies outside their economies. They are unable to pay these debts because the accumulation of capital alone may force some of these states to increase their external borrowing. This happened to a number of Arab oil-producers after the sudden rises in the price of oil in 1973. Ultimately, the question boils down once again to the political philosophy of the Authorities and the degree to which they represent the poorer social groupings in their society, for the benefit of whom development ought to be directed.

Iraq itself is something of a case in point. Since the Revolution of July 1968 seized power, no new sources of wealth have been found inside the country. Nevertheless, the tremendous developments of the last ten years show the real significance of a leadership closely linked with its people, and the feeling of the people that it works for its own benefit, not for that of a few reactionary and exploitative groups, and that it is building material well-being for its children and future generations.

In 1979 Saddam Hussein was sitting in his office with the Mauritanian Minister of information. They were talking about the revolutionary experiment in Iraq and its successes in various fields. The Mauritanian Minister showed satisfaction mixed with surprise. He said, "You have been in power for about ten years and have found no new sources of growth for your economy. Petrol, gas, dates-all were already there. But you could have advanced your country by exploiting these and new sources of wealth (2)"

Saddam Hussein looked into space as though recalling the harsh struggle in the course of the Revolution over the last ten years. Then he said: "In the summer of 1969 a large delegation went to the Gulf Emirates to borrow \$5,000,000. And in 1970 I visited the U.S.S.R. to try to defer a debt for 17,000,000 Dinars for purchases of military equipment. I hoped that they would agree to postpone it until the following year. When they refused

I said, 'When I return I shall settle the debt even if I have to sell my jacket'-and in fact, we deferred the debt. Then in 1978 the U.S.S.R. asked us for petrol to the value of \$150,000,000 only-they didn't want to pay that year; they wanted to pay the following year! So we said 'Yes' at once! "

Then his gaze returned from the distance and fell upon the man he was talking to. He continued, "So, what you said is true. There are no new sources of wealth here.

But if there is a capable leadership and a hard-working people, great steps forward can be made! (3) "

In accordance with this, capital occupies a secondary place and, as regards Iraq, other factors are more important. What are they? Saddam Hussein sums them up as follows:

The first basic factor is the power to grasp the tools for Implementing socialism so that steps may be taken in both 896,000,000 Dinars in 1969, had increased this by 1972 to 1,218,000,000 Dinars. In 1979-80 the total exceeded 15,000,000,000 Dinars. It can thus be seen how the nationalization of oil was necessary in the interests of the Iraqi people, and that there were two consequences to this: freedom from foreign imperialist influence and the achievement of an independent national will. The dependence of the Iraqi economy on the structure of world imperialism was broken.

An aspect of the above was that Iraq was spared entry onto the treadmill of foreign loans that were tied-or were at the very least oppressive--upon the national will in development activities. It is difficult-if not impossible--for the vast majority of backward or sleeping states to avoid them. In the long run they come to form, politically and economically, a wall that blocks their growth and shuts out the horizons of their development and progress. How many attempts at growth have failed in the Third World as a result of seduction by what were originally loans on easy terms but then became debts that smothered all growth. This policy is one of the many ways in which imperialism stops the development of the sleeping lands and keeps them in a state of backwardness, tied by chains that cannot be unlocked to the structure of world imperialism.

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The first basic factor is the power to grasp the tools for Implementing socialism so that steps may be taken in both time and place, since long-term growth in industry, agriculture and services must be balanced with the power of the people and the special tools for achieving targets.

The second factor is the nature of the present stage.

This may be considered under two headings:

a) Local characteristics-namely the society that the July Revolution took over, the nature of the relationships within it, and the distribution of wealth among the people. "We did not take over a society owned by a tiny minority while the majority owned nothing-as was the case in the U.S.S.R., for instance, at the time of the Revolution of October 1917. We took over a society that was indeed governed by reactionaries, but property was spread among large segments of the population, the majority of whom were composed of citizens of the country, and some of whom were revolutionaries (4)."

b) The effect of international politics and the nature of economic change in the world at large and in the area of the Middle East of which we form a part. "We must therefore be able to mould a horizontal extension of socialism in the light of the above (5)."

Hence, the central factor in the horizontal extension in the fields of industry, agriculture and service is not "waiting for the realization of the requisite capital accumulation", as Saddam Hussein himself states. But one essential problem remains: the problem of "knowledge"-technical skills that are needed for production in a modern society. What is Saddam Hussein's conception of how this should be dealt with in general, and in Iraq in particular? What solution does he propose?

The Indian nuclear physicist Homi Baba who set up India's nuclear plants said, "What is western civilization but additions to the civilizations of Egypt, Assyria, India and China? Today all these countries are poor, but the West was built on their discoveries: the use of fire, the domestication of animals, agriculture, irrigation, writing, arithmetic, gunpowder, and the technology of many countries that today we call backward (6)."

There is no doubt that the Indian nuclear scientist was quite right when he said this. It is sufficient to mention three of these basic discoveries that the Ancient World knew centuries before Europe but which were very significant in the European Renaissance. China discovered gunpowder before Europe but used it for fireworks, not in making guns. Printing was also used in China for making playing cards, while the compass was known to the Arabs a long while before Europe.

Nevertheless it was Europe that had the first great technological revolution in modern history: the Industrial Revolution in the second half of the eighteenth century. Its essence was the use of machines in place of human muscles as a result of numerous simple inventions that were either original or had been well known in earlier societies. What enabled Europe to do this was the nature of its economic and social structure at a time when its mercantile capitalism controlled a vast colonial empire based on Western Europe and England. It possessed the incentive to increase production, and the capital necessary to finance it. This was the means by which the ideas of inventors were put to practical effect. With every step forward this social structure stood behind it and pushed it yet further forward by means of research, the encouragement of learning and the foundation of universities.

With every step in the development of this social structure technology advanced as well. At the present time it has become one of the most terrible weapons, firmly in the grip of world monopolist capitalism. But this weapon has become a Trojan Horse after the revolutions of the new peoples that were consequent on the Second World War and the collapse of the traditional colonialist empires.

This infiltrates into the hearts of the recently liberated peoples. It is "Neo-Colonialism". . . Until now there have been three stages of this international process. In the first, world imperialist capitalism established a relationship with the colonized countries whereby the latter were purely agricultural and the imperialist countries alone possessed industry. In the second stage the colonialist system was transformed so that the imperialist states exported their capitalism as such and continued to export some manufactured goods.

It became possible for the secondary capitalism in the colonized-or apparently colonized-countries to employ some of its financial resources in manufacturing, provided that they only produced consumer goods and did not set up independent means of production.

In the third stage there is another transformation, if only partial, in the development of imperialism itself into international monopoly capitalism. This is what is known as the third scientific revolution: the revolution of economic brains and automation. It consists in the imperialist states having industries with a very high level of productivity. This depends on a high level of science and technology. This enables heavy industry to be set up in some of the dependent capitalist states. Of course, this is only partial and is dependent on the world imperialist structure.

But what of the position of countries that break dependence and wish to build a new life on the necessary scientific and technological bases? Saddam Hussein says:

"The industrial states seem, so far as I can see, perfectly happy for a Great Wall of China to be built between their technical expertise and .the states of the Third World-or even the states of medium size. It is thus impossible for any of them to escape from the predicament of Third World countries. But I think that the industrial countries are going to behave as follows.

"First, distract the countries of the Third World with some types of industry, but in such a way that the present gap between the industrialized countries and these countries will be much as it is at present. In this way, progress will be slow. There are different ways in which this distraction can be achieved: letting them plunge into different types of industry that have a low priority; encouraging unprofitable investments so as to put their capital out of action, and preventing it from prospering in the true sense of the word. Another way is in their use of their technicians: place them in works of low priority or of secondary priority, or employ a larger number of technicians than is necessary. There are other ways too.

"Secondly, if it is impossible for the industrial states to monopolize all areas of science and technology, then force Third World countries to rely on monopolies of technical specialization. For, by the nature of international politics, the Third World must have recourse to such specializations, as it cannot provide itself. At the same time, the industrial countries can rid themselves of uncomplicated industries, which will not imperil their monopoly of technical specialization. They have two considerations in doing this. First, the environment is being polluted in the industrialized countries, and they realize that they must transfer certain industries and replace them with others that are in different fields. They do not mind the possibility of becoming importers according to special agreements. Secondly, the monopoly in technical fields and the maintenance of standards involve them ridding themselves of certain industries that require a high content of manual labour, of which there is a scarcity in the West; or these states have begun to realize that it is impossible to monopolize all areas and branches –of industry and technology that require specialization...(7)"

How, then, is there interaction with science and technology in an important area such as industry in the light of all these considerations? What is the opinion of?

Saddam Hussein on this matter?

To begin with, he warns against the path of "imitation": "imitation of the movement of the great industrial nations by following in their footsteps. This is because the attempt to follow in them, which is known as "the traditional copying of their movement", will not lead us out of our backwardness but will confirm the distance between us and the advanced states, and may even make it greater (8)".

It must be pointed out here that Saddam Hussein's view is very different from that of the majority of the leaders of modernization in the sleeping world, including some of the leaders of our Arab regions themselves. They are governed by a logic in terms of which "modernization" is a synonym for "progress", and "progress" a synonym for "the West". Now, it is essential to reach the level achieved by the West, which is the "ideal model", but how? There is a fault in this logic: how is it possible to "repeat" the experiment of capitalism whereby the West reached its present level of progress either by means of liberal capitalism or international capitalism? The sleeping societies are backward today for the same reasons that the advanced societies were backward two or three centuries ago. For the leaders of these states and nations, and the social structures that they represent, backwardness has assumed a special meaning: mere backwardness in time, which can be crossed by importing the technological miracles that the West has now achieved.

One of the leading Arab economists tells us: "The Western miracles of technology are the practical fruit of a relatively long development of civilization. The importing of some of

these miracles will not give birth to development as such in our society, just as the importing of a tracking station to link up with a satellite will not bring the importing country into the space age.

Building a nuclear power station will at best only lead to a few individuals gaining skill in handling equipment that was manufactured entirely abroad. Foreign skills must be relied on to work and maintain it. It is possible that the best of the highly trained individuals who work on it will join the army of emigrants; and then the station will remain a body strange to the whole society. If a screw drops out, everything will stop until a replacement arrives from abroad. And that will only happen after those who have paid a vast sum for it have discovered that it has become technologically obsolete (9)."

Saddam Hussein presents a view that is different, perceptive and original. It relies on three basic roots.

The first is, "We must prepare ourselves to co-operate with science and technology and master them thoroughly. We must therefore stress research centres and the need for a large number of cadres, and study the most up-to-date scientific and technological discoveries if we are going to be a truly developed country industrially in a form that suits our objectives. So we must co-operate with science and technology, just as others did when they were at our stage (10)".

In this field we must remember that scientific research in the present age has proved extremely profitable. What real growth has there been which did not start with a stage of scientific research, followed by the implementation of that research? Research is thus an integral part of growth. In this age, the link between scientific research and economic production has increased. Perhaps the strengthening of this link and the deep interaction between theoretical research and practical application is what has contributed most to the progress that has taken the form of explosions in theoretical research and in its economic application equally. Furthermore, expenditure on scientific research represents one of the basic criteria of our age for measuring the level of progress in any society, and possibly also has that society's seriousness in overcoming backwardness. If the prevailing trend in many of the sleeping countries is towards the importing of factories and technological discoveries from the advanced countries, and a confidence that this is the ideal implementation of the concept of "coming of age", the experiments have shown firmly that this process does not lead to real progress, and that their partisans have not secured themselves a place as eminent men of our age unless they can also provide resolute and sophisticated leadership of the scientists who represent the dynamic element in development and growth. Science, then, is the criterion, but it is also the foundation. The new civilization is basically science; and without science there is no room for any community-no matter how great its past was-in the future.

The role of every community will be determined by its scientific knowledge, and the scientific civilization will be the stage on which it will perform in the new civilization.

The power that governs the world of today is essentially the power of civilization: the power of science. As Servan-Schreiber put it: "The might of armies, raw materials and capital are neither the signs nor the tools of power. Even factories are only the external signs of this power. Modern power is the ability to invent-to research-and the ability to transform these inventions into products-technology. It is not land, the number of inhabitants, or tools: it is thought or, more precisely the readiness of man to think and create (11),"

The second is "the national adaptation of technology and the adaptation of the uses of science. It is not necessary for us to take all the scientific and technological discoveries and to use them as they are, We modify them or some of them, in the light of our goals and our political social and economic circumstances (I2)".

We must say here that the problem of the national adaptation of technology is one of the most important problems that have exercised and do exercise the brains of advanced economic thinkers in the sleeping countries and also in the Western countries themselves. The true concept of technology in the eyes of these thinkers is: "The implementation of the sciences within a given society in a search for a solution to the given problems that face it, relying on the potential that it has in order to encourage the values in which it believes (13)." This is because, just as in the past, any discovery that is made can remain no more than a cause for reflection and have no influence on production at all, even though it may provide the actual solution to a problem which society faces. All technological accomplishments have a social significance and reflect the characteristics of the society that accomplished them. Or, as some, would put it, they "bear its hereditary stamp". Therefore, their effectiveness is linked with the environment in which they are born and will decline if the marks of that society vanish. The converse is also true. Imported technology often resembles organ transplants. It is hardly surprising that some societies treat imported technology which has not been modified in accordance with its new domicile and environment in the same way that a body will treat a transplanted organ: by rejection 4).

Growth cannot mean copying the civilization of the West and erasing the native personality and civilization. The ability to imitate is not the most important human characteristic. The most important human characteristic is the ability to create and innovate. "Modernization", as understood by the majority of Third World leaders, is the concept that has led them to experiments that have failed, even though it is the ability to use what others have produced. Saddam Hussein understands it to mean something different: the power of a society to renew itself as a whole, and to build its life anew without any cultural split in its personality or break with its history.

The third is "industrialization". This is that we should industrialize in our own way and in accordance with our national goals and ambitions. We shall not refrain from industrializing in areas where we could buy what we want instead, while we shall not necessarily industrialize in areas of technical calculation and economic importance where such would not be in accordance with our total economic strategy. To do otherwise would be a mistake.

Another very dangerous mistake is to imagine that a wise choice of the type of industrialization, which ought to be undertaken, can be made merely with reference to our financial potential and the size of our population. We must not enter into industrialization in such a way, since we would fall into the trap of opening up industries in various limited areas while not doing so in those central areas that are vital if we are to change our society and turn our potential into achievement through our, political, nationalist and popular calculations (15).

Saddam Hussein considers here the fundamental problem of the achievement of growth. This is the strategy of growth and its relation to the general strategy of society as a whole. His rejection of slavish imitation of the Western World is not solely because of its impossibility, or the possibility that it might lead to a completely contradictory result-

namely an increase in backwardness. It is also because he considers it to be an immoral strategy for his great society and homeland (16).

For Saddam Hussein, every step on the path of industrialization must be linked with the goals-or more precisely, with the integrated strategic view for the development of Iraqi society, which is itself connected with the horizons of Arab development as a whole. We shall give two examples, which show clearly the course of his thought. The first is connected with the question of building heavy industry in Iraq. "When considering this matter, the technical specialists look at Iraq's need for heavy industry and its potential. They draw up a plan in accordance with their impression of these factors, and then take the first great step towards implementing it. Here they are mistaken 17)." What does he think himself?

He says, "The political brain, when considering the question of heavy industry in this country, must take into account the needs of the community in the light of its future, international political developments, and the development of the link in time, place and social movement between our regions and the whole Arab homeland.

When we consider industrialization, we must consider in depth the probable development economically, socially and militarily in the Arab regions-that is, we must study these matters in the light of the role that Iraq might play in building such industry within the context of national planning (1) ".

The second example is concerned with the construction of an arms industry. Is it possible for Iraq to manufacture all the arms it needs? Saddam Hussein says, "In order to answer this question fully, we must consider a basic point: states that are hostile, now or in the future, will be friendly with the U.S.A. or allied with them for a long time to come. Therefore, the arms we need must be manufactured at the same level of technology as in the U.S.A.

Now we are unable to manufacture all that our army needs or to dispense with alliances with states able to be a major source of arms for our forces, for the states with which we are likely to find ourselves at war are, and probably be in the future, states friendly with the U.S.A. (19)".

Does this imply the abandonment of any thought of building an arms industry? Saddam Hussein replies: "No.

The states that supply us with arms are friendly, but we cannot be certain that the present pattern will continue indefinitely. The states that supply us do not necessarily agree with us in all our aims, for the boundaries of our aims and ambitions do not lie in Iraq but extend through the whole Arab homeland. We must therefore be prepared to manufacture arms when it is appropriate to do so, even though this may conflict with the strategy of some of the supplier nations (20)."

Such are the basic conceptions of his ideology with regard to its implementation in a given area: the question of economic growth in Iraqi society. We consider that this is the dialectical framework which he has constructed to deal with the " problem.

We do not think it is strange that we should have begun our presentation of this section with the words of Servan Schreiber: "There is no growth for societies or mankind without challenges. " This is because one of the basic characteristics of Saddam Hussein ' s thought in this area-and possibly in all other areas-is not just a willingness to meet challenges, but also a willingness to take the offensive.

But taking the offensive does not mean foolhardiness: it means the strategic coronation of a balanced, intellectual solution that a political leader understands entirely and implements successfully.

The slogan of his life, his experiment and his struggle is: Progress is a battlefield, just as life is a battlefield. And when was the history of human society ever really different from military history?

Notes

- 1) Saddam Hussein, Unqolu Taqalid al-Hizb ila al-Dawla.
- 2) From the meeting between Saddam Hussein and The Mauritanian Minister of Information in Baghdad, 1979.
- 3) Ibid.
- 4) Saddam Hussein, Tariquna Khass fi Bina' al-Ishtirakiyya.
- 5) Ibid.
- 6) P.M.S. Blackett, Technology and world Advancement in The Advancement of Science IX, 1975 London.
- 1) Saddam Hussein, Hawla at- Takammul ma'a al-Ilm wat- Taqniyya (On the Integration with Science and Technology), address in The Planning Council Meeting, 12-4-1977.
- 8) Ibid.
- 9) Isma'il Sabri Abdullah, Istratijiyyat al-tiknulujiyya (The Strategy of Technology), in Istratijiyyat at- Tanmiyya fi Misr, pp. 531-532.
- 10) Saddam Hussein, loc. cit.
- 11) Sharibir, op. cit., p. 315.
- 12) Saddam Hussein, loc. cit.
- 13) Isma'il Sabri Abdullah, op. cit. p. 537.
- 14) Ibid.
- 15) Saddam Hussein, loc. cit.
- 16) Ibid.
- 11) Saddam Hussein, Tariquna al-Khass...
- 18) Ibid.
- 19) Saddam Hussein, op. cit.
- 20) Ibid.